



1. The Lady rejects Sweet-Look's heart. From *Le Roman de la Poire*, Paris, c. 1260-70.

The 13th Century Woman's Headdress

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2. Villard de Honnecourt. Page from a Model Book. c. 1230 to 1240.

In the 13th century the veil which had been the predominate form of women's headdress in Western Europe gave way to a new style. There's no one good

word to describe this fashion. I've heard SCA people call it a filet, torque, and the Coffee Filter hat. From looking at artwork it seems like this was style of upper class women. The clergy did not seem too fond of this style because the personifications of harshness, luxury or vanity are pictured in it during this time. (Figure 1) However, real (if idealized) women wear this style on legal records, wax seals, and on pictorial tombstones.

The main features of this headdress are a strap around the chin, a crown-like circlet of linen, and a net to contain the hair. I'll discuss each part separately.

The Barbette

The word barbette means "little beard" and it's not a surprising name for a band of fabric that wraps around the chin and over the head. The costuming books often say that the barbette should be pinned. I haven't found any period evidence in the sculptures or paintings. Perhaps I've not found a clear enough reproduction. I find fitting and sewing the top of the barbette closed works well. Rounding the seam on top slightly keeps it on my head and protects my scalp from sunburn. Linen is the best material to use. It breaths well and relaxes slightly as the day goes on.

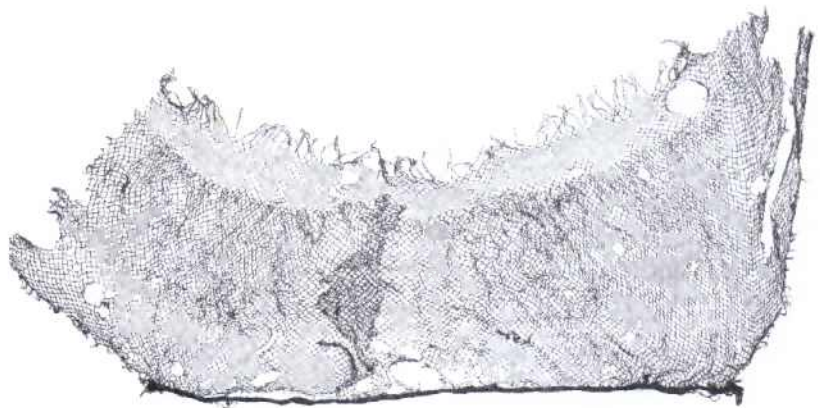
As you can see in the figures the width of the barbette varies from almost a wimple covering the ears and neck, to a narrow token band.

Hairnet

The hairnet is often called a crespinette. I found this a curious term and since it wasn't listed in Eunice Goddard's glossary of woman's clothing terms. I wondered why it was used for a hairnet. I found the answer in, of all places, a French cooking website. The term "crepinette" is the word for the fat lining around the intestines of a mammal. It is often used as the casing for sausage dishes. The net-like appearance of the crepinette connection to a hair net makes a little more sense. I'm told that there's a complex linguistic reason why the "s" creeps in but I'm satisfied now.

Of all the elements of this headdress the only surviving examples are of the hairnet or crespinette. The book *Clothing and Textile* (Crowfoot et al) illustrates three hair nets found in London from the 13 and 14th centuries. All of these have similar basic construction where the knots are done with a sheet bend knot and worked in a circle until the desired length is

reached. The remains of a fingerwoven band on one of the 14th century London nets indicate how it was secured to the wearer's head. (Figure 2.5)



As anyone who has tried to follow the diagram for netting found in Textiles and Clothing they are somewhat unclear. I struggled with this and it finally clicked when I took a class at Lilies from Lady Giraude Benet. The method she taught is called the "sheet bend" and it same as what was used back then including a netting needle and a gauge for keeping the loops even.

All of the surviving nets are made of silk. Silk nets are very beautiful and cling to the hair (as opposed to those cheap nylon snoods that slip right off). Textiles derived from animals, such as wool and silk, survive in the archaeological record much better than plant materials. It is possible nets were made of linen, hemp, or wool in addition to silk. I find cotton crochet cord to be a useful substitute.

The Filet

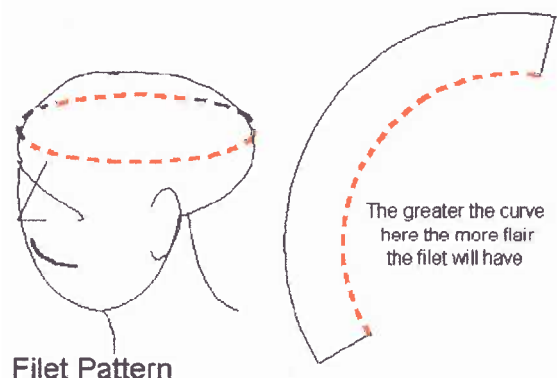
I like the word "filet" to describe the crown like portion of this headdress. Filet means "ribbon" or "something to secure the hair" in French. It's easy to see how this hat could have evolved out of the narrow band used to hold a veil in place in the 12th century.

There are no surviving examples of this headdress but there are plenty of period illuminations. The color is always white. The materials could be silk, linen, or wool. I don't think that there is any one answer to how it is constructed.

Experimenting with the filet

Over my experimenting with this sort of hat I wanted something that was period but also packable, and washable. Each of these goals provides pros and cons.

I started with Cynthia Virtue's site, which has instructions for making a very nice looking version. It calls for an arch of buckram as a base with a pleated arch of fabric on the outside. (Buckram is loosely woven linen or cotton that has been stiffened with starch or glue.) (Fig. 3) This hat looks a lot like the illustrations but it used a lot of fabric relatively speaking



Filet Pattern

3. Pattern for the base of a filet. Make out of buckram or leather

During the 13th century the main style of dress is based off of a rectangle. All of the surviving clothing gets its shape from the addition of gussets and gores rather than the trimming away of excess fabric like in the 14th century and beyond. (Burnham) They let nothing go to waste so why would they make a headdress that wasted fabric?

I fiddled with several different ways of making this style that involved a rectangle of linen and sometimes a rectangle of buckram. The one that is stiffened by several layers of linen (and no buckram) is packable and washable but takes a lot of fussing and ironing to stand up right. If the top of each pleat is pulled open and smashed you can get something like the “pork pie” hat pictured in the Manessa Codex. (Fig. 4)



4. Manessa Codex. Germany. c 1300.

There's one that has tight pleats on the inside and looser ones on the outside. The base is a rectangle of buckram (rather than an arch). This one looks pretty good but washing it dissolved the stiffening in the buckram.

Here's what has worked the best for me

Two messages that appeared on the SCA_Millianers Yahoo group in March of 2004 helped me find what has been the most workable solution for the 13th century women's headdress. One fellow suggested using leather rather than buckram to make the base. Another said he had success wrapping a long narrow piece of linen around a base. This works so incredibly well and I can hardly believe how elegantly simple this is.

I had some white leather and cut out an arch similar to the pattern illustrated above for the buckram. The linen is a 10 foot long piece that wraps around the leather. It's easy to remove for cleaning. Make sure you use undyed leather or sweat will make the color bleed onto the white linen.

Silk could also be used to wrap the base. I've used white trim as well. Care should be taken not to use metallic trim so as not to violate sumptuary laws in your home Kingdom.

Conclusions

I am sure that there are many ways to make this style of hat. Clearly, the long bandage of linen doesn't look anything like the Figure A (or 1). Figures C and D look as though they have a hat band with the pleating sticking out of the top rather like a chef's hat.

I urge you to do your own experimentations.

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Please contact me with any questions or comments.
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